INTRODUCTION

Of the various age groups within the U.S. population, the elderly comprise one of the most rapidly growing components. Accounting for only a small percentage of the total population just a few decades ago, better than one out of every ten Americans is now in excess of sixty-five years of age. As the number of elderly has grown, so has their visibility and the magnitude of their impact. Their distinctive lifestyles and preferences influence a growing segment of American life, their increasing political power has sparked considerable interest from politicians and governmental planners, and their display of economic strength in the marketplace has engendered more than a casual response from industry and business. More and more elderly Americans are cast in central roles in advertising and the visual arts, effectively challenging the long-term domination of these fields by the young. Institutions, including churches, hospitals, universities, and even prisons, have experienced the effects of their expanding numbers. Indicative of a growing national interest in the aging population, a recent White House Conference was devoted entirely to its needs and problems.

While today's elderly are more affluent and can look forward to living a greater number of years after retirement than their predecessors, their growing numbers have been the subject of much discussion and considerable concern. The health care delivery system, through which the elderly already receive a growing share of services, will be pressured even more as additional persons enter the older age groups and as a larger proportion of these individuals live to older ages. The same pattern holds for social services, as a multitude of new agencies, programs, and professionally trained personnel will be needed in order to serve the needs of an aging population. That the elderly are on the receiving end of most of the income transfers from governmental sources is not encouraging news for those of working age who must provide much of the support. Annual increases in the Social Security tax, for example, have become matter of fact, while speculation abounds concerning the long-term stability of the program itself as the ratio of elderly persons to workers continues to rise.

These are only a few of the implications associated with the growth of the elderly population in the United States, and in Alabama.[1] The impact will be felt by everyone, irrespective of age, as basic adjustments will be required in existing institutional arrangements and organizational structures. Judicious planning, therefore, must be undertaken at the earliest possible date if the specialized demands of an aging population are to be successfully confronted.

The following report reviews the growth of the elderly population in Alabama and provides a glimpse into the living arrangements and social characteristics of this segment of the state's citizenry. While the focus is on contemporary patterns and trends, it will begin by providing a historical review of population change.

Overview of the Elderly Population

Rapidly Increasing Numbers

The total population of the state has slightly more than doubled since the turn of the century. During that same period, however, the number of elderly persons has increased by approximately seven-fold. With only about 87,000 persons aged 60 plus residing in the state in 1900, the number had grown to slightly over 609,000 in 1980 (Table 1). Current estimates (mid-1985) place in excess of 663,000 Alabamians in that age group with projections indicating as many as 718,000 in that category by 1990. For those 65 plus, the corresponding numbers for 1985/1990 are 486,000 and 532,000.[2]

The elderly as a percentage of the state's total population has also increased dramatically. While those aged 60 plus amounted to only 4.8 percent of the population in 1900, the percentage had more than tripled by 1980 to 15.6. Over that same period, the percent 65 plus nearly quadrupled (from 3.0 to 11.3). (Table 1.) For mid-1985, estimates indicate that 16.2 percent of the population was in the 60 plus age group (11.8 percent for those 65 plus), while projections for 1990 are 16.4 (60 plus) and 12.2 (65 plus).[3] These trends closely mirror those

TABLE 1

ALABAMA POPULATION CHANGE, TOTAL POPULATION AND ELDERLY POPULATION, 1900 - 1980

Year	Total Population	Percent Change from Preceding Census	Number 60+	Percent Of Total Population 60+	Percent Change from Preceding Census	Number 65+	Percent Of Total Population 65+	Percent Change From Preceding Census
1900	1,828,697	--	86,938	4.8	--	54,306	3.0	--
1910	2,138,093	16.9	108,201	5.1	24.5	65,363	3.1	20.4
1920	2,348,174	9.8	133,993	5.7	23.8	83,498	3.6	27.7
1930	2,646,248	12.7	155,188	5.9	15.8	99,240	3.8	18.9
1940	2,832,961	7.1	211,002	7.4	36.0	136,209	4.8	37.3
1950	3,061,743	8.1	287,881	9.4	36.4	198,648	6.5	45.8
1960	3,266,740	6.7	369,765	11.3	28.4	261,147	8.0	31.5
1970	3,444,165	5.4	475,287	13.8	28.5	325,961	9.5	24.8
1980	3,893,888	13.1	609,114	15.6	28.2	440,015	11.3	35.0

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-B2, Table 21; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 20.

occurring for the U.S. as a whole, where 11.3 percent (exactly the same percentage as Alabama) was aged 65 plus in 1980 with the proportion projected to increase to 12.7 by the end of the decade.[4]

During each decade of the twentieth century, the number of elderly (whether 60 plus or 65 plus) has increased rapidly — much faster than Alabama's population generally. For each decade between 1930 and 1970, for example, the 65 plus group grew approximately five times faster than that for all age categories combined. While the growth rate moderated during the 1970s, this age segment still grew over three times more rapidly than the total population (Table 1). More recently, the Census Bureau has estimated that Alabama's overall population increased by 2.5 percent between 1980 and 1984, but that the proportion 65 plus jumped by 8.2.[5]

Elderly Nearly Outnumber Teens

The state's elderly population (i.e., 65 plus) grew faster than any other age group during the 1970s, except for young adults in their 20s and 30s (who increased by 36.8 percent). Growth among the elderly far outpaced that for teenagers, which was registered at only 4.2 percent. As a consequence, there were only about 71,000 fewer aged persons in the state's population in 1980 than those between the ages of thirteen and nineteen.[6]

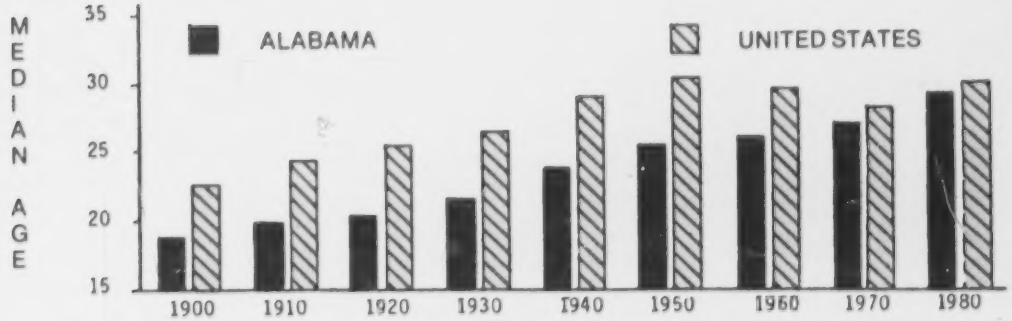
Median Age Near Thirty

Changes in the median age of the Alabama population provide another index of aging. In 1900, the median age (half above, half below a given age) was only 18.9. By 1980, the median age had climbed to 29.2. As shown in Figure 1, Alabama's median age has been marked by uninterrupted increases since the beginning of the century. While lagging perceptibly behind the U.S. until 1970 (largely a result of high fertility rates), the gap is now beginning to close. As a consequence, the median age during the remainder of the century is expected to parallel that of the country as a whole.

The rapid increase in the elderly population, along with the upward trend in the median age, can be traced in large measure to lower mortality rates. The really major gains in controlling mortality, however, have been made toward the beginning of life rather than at the end. With many more youngsters surviving the neonatal and early childhood period, life expectancies — along with the number of persons eventually entering the older age groups — have increased substantially. Migration patterns

FIGURE 1

MEDIAN AGE, ALABAMA AND THE U.S., 1900-1980



	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Alabama	18.9	19.7	20.3	21.5	23.8	25.5	26.0	27.0	29.2
United States	22.9	24.1	25.3	26.5	29.0	30.1	29.5	28.1	30.0

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B1, Table 42 and PC80-1-B2, Table 20; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-B2, Table 21.

are also a factor. Throughout much of this century, the state has experienced net migration losses involving younger persons for the most part. The differential tendency for those of various ages to migrate has left behind an aging population.

The Old Get Older

Not only are there more older persons in the state's population now than in the past, but as a result of increases in life expectancy, a new phenomenon is occurring: that of the aging of the aged. More persons than ever before are reaching the milestone of three score and ten and living well into their 80s or even 90s. All age categories within the Alabama population beginning with the 70-74 group increased notably during the 1970s, with the 85 plus age segment experiencing an increment of nearly 40.0 percent (Table 2). Considered to be "frail elderly," the special needs of this rapidly growing segment of the population will demand increased attention from service providers in the years ahead.

Females Outnumber Males

During the 1970s, elderly females increased at a faster pace within the total population than elderly males. Amounting to 7.9 percent of Alabama's population in 1970, females aged 60 plus had increased to 9.2 percent by 1980 (Table 2). The proportion of elderly males, however, rose from 5.9 percent to only 6.5. These variations trace, in part, to the continuing differences in life expectancies between the sexes. While mortality rates have declined among both sexes in recent years, the fall has been somewhat greater among aged females than males.

TABLE 2

ELDERLY POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX, ALABAMA, 1970 AND 1980

Age	1970 Number	1970 Percent of Total Population	1980 Number	1980 Percent of Total Population	Percent Change 1970-1980
			A. Males		
60-64	68,558	2.0	76,539	2.0	11.6
65-69	53,311	1.5	67,931	1.7	27.4
70-74	36,215	1.1	50,261	1.3	38.8
75-79	23,451	0.7	31,608	0.8	34.8
80-84	13,435	0.4	15,594	0.4	16.1
85/over	8,994	0.3	9,979	0.3	11.0
Total 60+	203,964	5.9	251,912	6.5	23.5
			B. Females		
60-64	80,768	2.3	92,560	2.4	14.6
65-69	68,843	2.0	88,364	2.3	28.4
70-74	49,535	1.4	71,826	1.8	45.0
75-79	35,292	1.0	51,018	1.3	44.6
80-84	21,461	0.6	29,394	0.8	37.0
85/over	15,424	0.4	24,040	0.6	55.9
Total 60+	271,323	7.9	357,202	9.2	31.7
			C. Total		
60-64	149,326	4.3	169,099	4.3	13.2
65-69	122,154	3.5	156,295	4.0	27.9
70-74	85,750	2.5	122,087	3.1	42.4
75-79	58,743	1.7	82,626	2.1	40.7
80-84	34,896	1.0	44,988	1.2	28.9
85/over	24,418	0.7	34,019	0.9	39.3
Total — All Persons 60+	475,287	13.8	609,114	15.6	28.2

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC (1)-B2, Table 20; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 20.

As to be expected, therefore, the number of elderly females increased considerably faster during the last decade than the number of aged males (31.7 percent vis-a-vis 23.5). For males, the most rapidly growing age groups were those in their late 60s and throughout the 70s. Among females, however, it was the oldest age groups (i.e., those beyond 70) that displayed the greatest rate of increase and that largely account for the "aging of the old." Particularly noteworthy is the very rapid rate of growth experienced by those aged 85 plus (Table 2). Again, improvements in mortality experience largely account for the increases occurring for both males and females. Differentials between the sexes in the rate of improvement are easily discerned, however, with females in all age groups increasing at a faster rate than males.

A close examination of median age differences (see Figure 2) provides further indication of male-female disparities in life expectancy. While there was not much variation during the first half of the century, age differences between the sexes have become much more pronounced during the last three decades. The median age for Alabama females is now almost thirty-one, nearly three years higher than that for males.

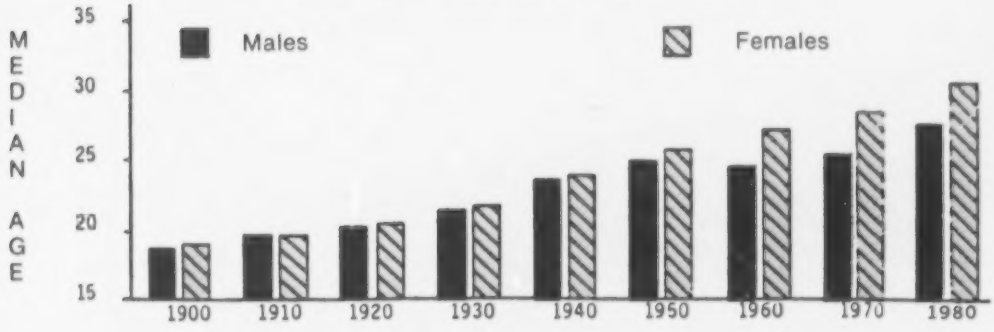
Lowest Ratio Ever

One consequence of the continuing variations in life expectancies is an unbalanced sex ratio (i.e., fewer males than females) in the older age groups. In 1980, there were only 66.3 males per 100 females for those 65 plus while in 1970 there were 71.1 (ratios calculated from data in Table 2). Alabama's sex ratio was nearly equal in 1920 (at 99.8), but prior to that time males predominated.[7] International migration patterns, in which males outnumbered females in earlier years, may partially explain the excess of males prior to the 1920s. Higher mortality rates among females during past decades (especially as a result of childbearing) are also a factor.

The data in Table 2 indicate, furthermore, that the sex ratio decreases with age and that it has gone down over time. In 1970, there were 84.9 males aged 60-64 per 100 females in the Alabama population. In the 85 plus age group, however, the ratio was 58.3. Corresponding data for 1980 reveal sex ratios of 82.7 and 41.5, respectively. Part of the decline in the ratio of males to females can be traced to the greater increase in life expectancy among females than males during the last decade. Another factor is the large increase during the 1970s in the number of females in the 70 plus age category. Females in this age group increased by 44.8 percent, while the number of males increased by only 30.9 percent. (All

FIGURE 2

MEDIAN AGE BY SEX, ALABAMA, 1900-1980



	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Males	18.7	19.7	20.2	21.4	23.6	25.0	24.7	25.4	27.8
Females	19.0	19.7	20.3	21.7	24.0	25.9	27.1	28.5	30.7

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 20; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC (1)-B2, Table 21.

of the above calculations are based on data appearing in Table 2.)

Implications of Growth/ Differential Mortality

The increase in the elderly population, both in numerical terms and in proportional changes, portends a greater demand for a number of vital services in the years ahead. The need for suitable housing, appropriate recreational outlets, and a wide range of social and health services will increase substantially. In addition, the elderly will continue to display growing political clout and to exercise considerable influence in the business and market sectors. Their lifestyle and outlook will have implications for a growing segment of American society, much as the "baby boom" generation of the 1950s has had significant impact on national issues and trends over the last two decades. Due to their increasing numbers, the demands of the oldest of the old, overly represented by widowed females, will be particularly felt. Especially noteworthy will be their need for health care, specialized housing arrangements, and a wide variety of social services.

Racial Distribution/ Residence Patterns

Whites Outnumber Blacks

Approximately three-fourths (76.5 percent) of those aged 60 plus in 1980 were

TABLE 3

ELDERLY POPULATION BY AGE, SEX, AND RACE, ALABAMA, 1970 and 1980

Age	1970 Number	1970 Percent of Total Age Group	1980 Number	1980 Percent of Total Age Group	Percent Change 1970-1980
		A. White Males			
60-64	52,073	11.0	61,062	10.0	17.3
65-74	65,418	13.8	90,041	14.8	37.6
75+	33,447	7.0	42,032	6.9	25.7
Total 60+	150,938	31.8	193,135	31.7	28.0
		B. White Females			
60-64	60,682	12.8	71,852	11.8	18.4
65-74	86,488	18.2	121,325	19.9	40.3
75+	54,378	11.4	79,509	13.1	46.2
Total 60+	201,548	42.4	272,686	44.8	35.3
		C. Black Males			
60-64	16,408	3.5	15,284	2.5	- 6.9
65-74	23,969	5.0	27,879	4.6	16.3
75+	12,266	2.6	15,016	2.5	22.4
Total 60+	52,643	11.1	58,179	9.6	10.5
		D. Black Females			
60-64	19,984	4.2	20,470	3.4	2.4
65-74	31,733	6.7	38,426	6.3	21.1
75+	17,675	3.7	24,675	4.1	39.6
Total 60+	69,392	14.6	83,571	13.7	20.4
Total — All Persons 60+[a]	475,287	100.0	609,114	100.0	28.2

[a] Total includes 766 of other races in 1970 and 1,543 in 1980.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-B2, Table 20; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2. Table 20.

white; 23.3 percent were black; and the remainder represented persons of other races (percentages calculated from data appearing in Tables 1 and 3). White females comprised the largest group of Alabama's elderly (44.8 percent), followed by white males (31.7). (Table 3.) White females represent a larger proportion of the older population now than ten years ago, white males have remained about the same, while blacks (both males and females) have declined. This pattern undoubtedly traces to the heavy out-migration of blacks during earlier decades of this century, leaving few blacks in the older age groups today. Overall, aged blacks have declined as a percentage of the total elderly (from 25.7 percent in 1970 to 23.3 in 1980) while whites have increased (from 74.3 percent to 76.5). (Percentages are based on data contained in Table 3.)

An examination of various age cohorts among the state's elderly reveals that the number in all race-sex categories has increased over the last decade, except for black males in the 60-64 age range (Table 3). Most of the increases have been substantial, particularly those involving whites. The increase in the 60-64 age category is universally lower, however, than that for other age groups. This age cohort traces to the 1915-20 period; hence, the lower growth rate may reflect postponement of marriage and decreased fertility levels associated with the World War I era. Not to be ignored, however, is the widespread flu epidemic of 1918.

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION
BY RACE AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE, ALABAMA, 1970 and 1980

Place of Residence	1970 Number	1970 Percent of Total Group	1980 Number	1980 Percent of Total Group	Percent Increase 1970-1980
		A. White 65+			
Urban	131,905	55.0	193,675	58.2	46.8
Central City	56,264	23.5	85,360	25.6	51.7
Rural	107,826	45.0	139,232	41.8	29.1
Total	239,731	100.0	332,907	100.0	38.9
		B. Black 65+			
Urban	51,755	60.4	70,758	66.8	36.7
Central City	25,234	29.5	40,064	37.8	58.8
Rural	33,888	39.6	35,238	33.2	4.0
Total	85,643	100.0	105,996	100.0	23.8
		C. Total Population 65+			
Urban	184,021	56.5	265,095	60.2	44.1
Central City	81,689	25.1	125,790	28.6	54.0
Rural	141,940	43.5	174,920	39.8	23.2
Total	325,961	100.0	440,015	100.0	35.0
		D. Total Population 75+			
Urban	66,948	56.7	100,163	62.0	49.6
Central City	29,141	24.7	47,549	29.4	63.2
Rural	51,109	43.3	61,470	38.0	20.3
Total	118,057	100.0	161,633	100.0	36.9

[a] The number white aged 65 plus added to the number black 65 plus does not total the number reported for the total population 65 plus due to the exclusion of persons of other races from the black/white categories.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-B-2, Table 20; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 19.

White Females Abound

The general pattern that emerges during the last decade is the growing number of elderly whites, females in particular. Until mortality schedules improve for other segments of the elderly population, this trend can be expected to continue. Population estimates for 1985, for example, indicate an increase in the white female segment of Alabama's population 65 plus to 46.1 percent of all elderly (up from 45.6 in 1980), while projections to 1990 foretell a further increase to 46.5.[8]

Increasingly Urban

Consistent with trends occurring within the population generally, older Alabamians became increasingly concentrated in urban areas during the 1970s.[9] The proportion of the elderly 65 plus living in towns and cities increased from 56.5 percent in 1970 to 60.2 percent in 1980 (Table 4), achieving approximately the same percentage urban as the total population. Only about one-fourth of those 65 plus resided in the central cities of the state's eight metropolitan areas, indicating that a significant number of the elderly live in smaller towns and cities scattered across the state. Still, however, a sizable number lived in such cities as Birmingham (39,399), Mobile (22,311), Montgomery (17,916), and Huntsville (10,039).[10]

Elderly blacks were somewhat more urbanized than whites in 1980, with 66.8 percent living in urban areas as opposed to 58.2 for whites (Table 4). Furthermore, a higher proportion of older blacks than whites resided in the central cities of the state's metropolitan centers.

All components of Alabama's elderly population are rapidly urbanizing (see Table 4). Regarding age, the frail elderly (considered to be those 75 plus) experienced the greatest increase in urban growth (at 49.6 percent) during the 1970s. For those 65 plus, the percentage was 44.1. Although the number of aged whites living in urban areas increased somewhat more than the number of older blacks, the percentage difference was only moderate (46.8 as compared with 36.7). The most rapid growth of all, however, has occurred in the central cities of metropolitan areas. For all groups (65 plus, 75 plus, whites and blacks), the percentage increase during the 1970s was in excess of 50.0, with the greatest increase registered among those 75 plus.

Urban Costs vs. Benefits

The concentration of the elderly in urban areas offers both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, most of the specialized services required by the elderly are readily available and conveniently located. When larger groups of clients are concentrated in a single area (as in the state's large metropolitan centers), many types of services can be provided more efficiently and economically. Clients generally have better access to — and more knowledge of — available services and, because of their growing political influence, elected officials may be more responsive to their distinctive needs.

Urban residence does not come without cost, however. Much of the social interaction between persons in cities is based on, and results from, participation in the labor force. Once the individual retires, many of these contacts are no longer maintained; hence, elderly persons have a tendency to become somewhat alienated and socially isolated. Many elderly persons own their own homes, and have lived in the same houses throughout much of the family life cycle. Frequently, however, their homes are located in older neighborhoods that are experiencing varying degrees of deterioration. Not wanting to move, yet fearing the prospects of neighborhood change, new people with different lifestyles, and fundamental changes in community institutions, a considerable degree of dissonance and personal discord may be the result. Public transportation services, moreover, are on the decline in many cities. With the curtailment of public transportation, the elderly are frequently forced to depend on considerably more expensive forms of conveyance.

Transportation is a particularly vexing problem for Alabama's elderly, regardless of place of residence. Almost a third of the housing units occupied by a household head or spouse 65 plus in 1980 were without the presence of a motor vehicle. Furthermore, one-fifth of the elderly were classified as having a transportation disability, with many of these requiring specialized transportation modes such as vans or buses with wheelchair lifts (Table 5).

TABLE 5

TRANSPORTATION RELATED PROBLEMS AMONG THE ELDERLY
BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE, ALABAMA, 1980

Transportation Problem	Place of Residence: Rural Number	Rural Percent of Total 65+	Urban Number	Urban Percent of Total 65+	Total Number	Total Percent of Total 65+
Housing Units With No Vehicle Available[a]	33,317	27.3	55,540	31.0	88,857	29.5
Persons 65+ With Transportation Disability	36,048	20.9	49,177	19.7	85,225	20.2

[a] Occupied by householder or spouse 65 plus.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-C2, Table 70; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Housing, PC80-1-B2, Table 61.

Marital Status

Many Widows, Few Widowers

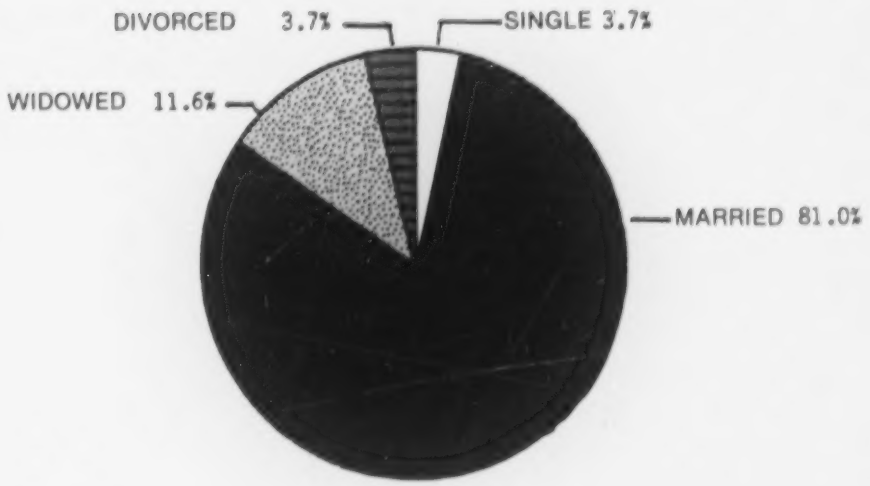
Elderly males are far more likely to be married than elderly females, while older females are much more apt to be widowed than older males (Figure 3). While four-fifths (81.0 percent) of Alabama's males aged 60 plus were married at the time of the 1980 census, the corresponding percentage for females was only 43.0. On the other hand, while only 11.6 percent of the males aged 60 plus were widowed, about half (48.5 percent) of the females were widowed (Table 6). For males aged 65 plus in 1980, the percentage who were married dropped to 78.8, but for females it declined to just 35.8.[11] Again, it is the differential in life expectancies between the sexes that largely account for the variations. In 1984, for example, the life expectancy of a female born in Alabama outpaced that of a newly born male by approximately eight years.[12] A contributing factor, however, is the tendency for females to marry someone older than themselves.

Table 6 also provides comparisons concerning the marital status of Alabama's elderly over the last ten years by age-sex groups. Briefly, these data indicate that the percentage remaining unmarried has declined; that the proportion of married males has increased slightly; that the percentage of widowed males has dropped slightly; and that the percentage divorced has increased for both sexes. Further,

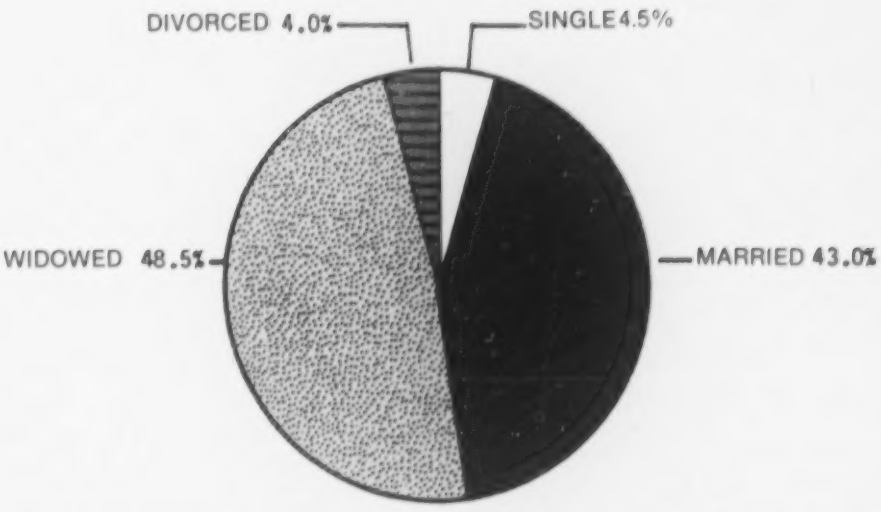
FIGURE 3

MARITAL STATUS OF PERSONS AGED SIXTY AND OVER,
ALABAMA, 1980

MALES



FEMALES



Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 205.

the data reveal that the proportion married, as well as divorced, has decreased with age, while the percentage widowed has increased dramatically.

Further analysis indicates that whites (both males and females) were more likely to be married than blacks in 1980. Approximately four-fifths (82.2 percent) of the white males 65 plus were married, compared to only 68.1 percent of the black

TABLE 6

MARITAL STATUS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION BY AGE GROUP AND SEX, ALABAMA, 1970 and 1980

Marital Status	Age Group: 60-64 Percent/Number	65-74 Percent/Number	75 + Percent/Number	Total Age Group Percent/Number
A. Males - 1970				
Single	4.7 (3,247)	4.8 (4,311)	5.4 (2,483)	4.9 (10,041)
Married	86.3 (59,675)	82.0 (73,772)	64.5 (29,451)	79.6 (162,898)
Widowed	5.6 (3,903)	10.6 (9,490)	28.3 (12,904)	12.8 (26,297)
Divorced	3.3 (2,286)	2.6 (2,348)	1.8 (807)	2.7 (5,441)
Total	100.0 (69,111)	100.0 (89,921)	100.0 (45,645)	100.0 (204,677)
B. Females - 1970				
Single	5.1 (4,241)	6.1 (7,288)	7.6 (5,346)	6.2 (16,875)
Married	61.3 (50,486)	44.6 (53,725)	19.1 (13,452)	43.1 (117,663)
Widowed	29.6 (24,414)	46.7 (56,210)	71.8 (50,583)	48.0 (131,207)
Divorced	3.9 (3,248)	2.6 (3,131)	1.5 (1,085)	2.7 (7,464)
Total	100.0 (82,389)	100.0 (120,354)	100.0 (70,466)	100.0 (273,209)
C. Males - 1980				
Single	3.9 (3,056)	3.6 (4,207)	3.4 (1,970)	3.7 (9,233)
Married	86.2 (66,678)	83.3 (97,599)	69.4 (39,908)	81.0 (204,185)
Widowed	5.2 (4,026)	9.4 (10,991)	24.6 (14,143)	11.6 (29,160)
Divorced	4.7 (3,612)	3.7 (4,301)	2.5 (1,456)	3.7 (9,369)
Total	100.0 (77,372)	100.0 (117,098)	100.0 (57,477)	100.0 (251,947)
D. Females - 1980				
Single	3.5 (3,275)	4.7 (7,486)	5.1 (5,369)	4.5 (16,130)
Married	63.5 (58,942)	46.6 (74,693)	19.4 (20,286)	43.0 (153,921)
Widowed	27.4 (25,452)	44.5 (71,313)	73.3 (76,745)	48.5 (173,510)
Divorced	5.6 (5,222)	4.3 (6,868)	2.2 (2,253)	4.0 (14,343)
Total	100.0 (92,891)	100.0 (160,360)	100.0 (104,653)	100.0 (357,904)

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-D2, Table 152; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 205.

males. On the other hand, 37.8 percent of the white females were married compared to only 29.8 percent of the black females. The same pattern also emerges when data for 1970 are examined.[13] Life expectancies vary considerably between the races, largely explaining the variations. In 1983, the life expectancy for a white female born in Alabama was 80.5 while that of a white male was 71.2. For nonwhite females, however, it was 75.9; for nonwhite males, only 65.5.[14] In addition, differences in marriage rates (i.e., blacks are less likely to marry than whites) also contribute to this pattern.[15]

Changes in the Family Affect Widowhood

To be elderly and widowed brings on problems in any setting, but particularly in contemporary urban society. In the United States it means the loss of companionship, a reduced income resulting in a lower level-of-living, and greater dependence on others, especially formal agencies, for basic services and assistance in meeting essential needs. Earlier, reliance could be placed on members of the extended family for various types of support but, with the decline of the kinship group and increased geographic mobility, this is no longer a possibility for a growing segment of the population.

Household Composition and Housing

More Live Alone

Both qualitative and quantitative relationships within the household have important implications for the elderly and the larger community. To be a member of a family or live in a household with others usually means companionship, emotional support and, often times, financial assistance from other family or household members. For those living alone, however, these stabilizing mechanisms may be absent. Those who provide services to the elderly, therefore, are frequently called upon to increase the

TABLE 7

HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS AMONG THE ELDERY POPULATION, ALABAMA 1970 AND 1980

Household Pattern	1970 Number 65+	1970 Percent of Total Population 65+	1980 Number 65+	1980 Percent of Total Population 65+	Percent Change 1970-1980
Male Family Householders[a]	102,062	32.9	129,080	30.6	25.5
Female Family Householders[a]	24,645	7.9	35,740	8.5	45.0
Spouses[b]	59,004	18.9	88,639	21.0	50.2
Other Relatives[c]	45,644	14.6	41,116	9.7	-9.9
Nonrelatives[d]	4,506	1.4	3,943	0.9	-12.5
Male Nonfamily Householders[e]	15,775	5.0	24,426	5.8	54.8
Female Nonfamily Householders[e]	60,057	19.2	99,151	23.5	65.1
Total	312,493[f]	100.0	422,095[f]	100.0	35.1

a The term "householder" was used in the 1980 Census to designate the household member (or one of the members) in whose name the home was owned or rented. The term "head of household," on the other hand, was used in 1970. A householder lives with one or more persons related to him/her by birth, marriage, or adoption.

b "Wife of head" in 1970; persons married to and living with a householder in 1980.

c Any person (other than the spouse) living in the household and related to the "head of household" (1970) or to the "householder" (1980). This category includes aging parents residing with their offspring, etc.

d Any person not related to the "head of household" (1970) or to the "householder" (1980). This arrangement involves elderly persons living with friends, elderly persons living with nonrelatives by virtue of employment, etc.

e This category encompasses elderly persons living alone.

f Excludes persons living in group quarters (i.e., homes for the aged, mental hospitals, roomers, boarders, etc.)

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-B2, Table 22, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 24.

involvement of the aged in informal community networks and/or to develop specialized programs to fit their particular needs. Both strategies are designed to assist the elderly in coping with living arrangements conducive to the development of loneliness and alienation.

Approximately 71.0 percent of the state's elderly population resided with someone else in 1980, down slightly from the 75.7 percent who shared living arrangements in 1970 (Table 7, adding percents reported for the first five categories). The vast majority of these persons were heads of households (or "householders," according to the terminology now used by the Census Bureau) who lived with their spouses. A significant — and growing — proportion of the elderly live alone, however, as indicated by the increase in both male and female nonfamily households during the last decade.

Given the rising number of elderly persons generally, the number of male household heads, female heads, and spouses of heads all increased greatly during the 1970s. Those living with relatives and those residing with nonrelatives both declined, however, while the number of males and females (especially females) living alone rose substantially (Table 7). This pattern may indicate a number of possibilities, including an increasing preference for living alone; the positive impact of programs designed to assist the elderly in maintaining an independent existence; improvements in health and economic status; and, on a more pessimistic note, a growing unwillingness of relatives and friends to care for the elderly.

Rising Number in Homes for the Aged

Persons not able to maintain a household or find other informal living arrangements often spend their remaining years in an institution of one type or another in some other form of collective setting. Referred to by the Census Bureau as "group quarters,"

TABLE 8

ELDERLY PERSONS LIVING IN GROUP QUARTERS BY TYPE OF QUARTERS AND SEX, ALABAMA, 1970 and 1980

Type of Group Quarters	1970 Number 65 +	1970 Percent of Total Category 65 + [a]	1980 Number 65 +	1980 Percent of Total Category 65 + [a]	Percent Change 1970-1980
		A. Males			
Homes for Aged	2,512	1.8	4,159	2.4	65.6
Mental Hospitals	968	0.7	145	0.1	-85.0
Roomers/Boarders	201	0.1	82	—[b]	-59.2
Other[c]	781	0.6	627	0.4	-19.7
Total, Males 65 + in Group Quarters	4,462	3.3	5,013	2.9	12.3
		B. Females			
Homes for Aged	7,049	3.7	12,380	4.7	75.6
Mental Hospitals	1,109	0.6	216	0.1	-80.5
Roomers/Boarders	141	0.1	184	0.1	30.5
Other[c]	774	0.4	483	0.2	-37.6
Total, Females 65 + in Group Quarters	9,073	4.8	13,263	5.0	46.2

[a] Percentages are based on sample counts of the total population aged 65 and over. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-C2, Table 48, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 207.

[b] Less than 0.1 percent.

[c] Includes persons housed in military quarters, correctional institutions, college dormitories, etc.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-D2, Table 154; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 207.

4.2 percent of the elderly population 65 plus was characterized by such living arrangements in 1980, while the percentage was 4.1 in 1970.[16] Elderly persons residing in group quarters in Alabama are more likely by far to be residents in homes for the aged (nursing homes in particular) than anything else. In 1980, 3.8 percent of all persons 65 plus lived in such settings, with the percentage increasing to 18.2 for those aged 85 plus.[17]

A much larger proportion of females aged 65 plus than males resided in group quarters in 1980 (i.e., 5.0 compared to 2.9). While both most frequently resided in homes for the aged the number of females in such settings was greatly in excess of the number of males (Table 8). It has previously been noted that females, on the average, live longer than males. They are more likely, therefore, to survive to the point where this type of living arrangement is most apt to be required.

The proportion of elderly males living in group quarters declined during the 1970s (from 3.3 to 2.9) while females increased (from 4.8 to 5.0). The rapid increase in females in the older age groups (75 plus) undoubtedly explains much of the increment (see Table 2). A particularly dramatic shift during the decade was the precipitous decline in the proportion of elderly persons (both males and females) who were patients in mental hospitals.

The actual number of aged persons living in group quarters increased by approximately one-third during the last decade (from 13,535 at the time of the 1970 Census to 18,276 on Census Day in 1980). (Determined from data presented in Table 8.) The increase was particularly noteworthy among females, but more males were also drawn to group settings. The number living in collectivities other than homes for the aged generally declined.

Some Housing Substandard

Most housing units (approximately three-fourths in 1980) occupied by those aged 65 plus are also owned by them, with the proportion slightly higher in rural areas (80.8 percent) than urban (71.1). This compares to approximately 65.0 percent of the units occupied by the population generally.[18] Although home ownership is the prevailing pattern among Alabama's elderly, much of the housing — especially in rural areas — is substandard. Homes tend to have been constructed in earlier years, with those in cities frequently located in older neighborhoods.

While limited information is available, the 1980 Census provides at least some insight into the living conditions of the state's elderly. These data indicate that over half of the housing units occupied by the elderly lack central heat, nearly 40.0 percent do not have air conditioning, with lower percentages (i.e., 10.0 percent or less) not having a telephone, and lacking complete plumbing and kitchen facilities (Table 9). For all of the preceding indicators of housing quality, rural housing occupied by the elderly fares substantially worse than that located in urban areas. Particularly significant is that central heating is absent in nearly 70.0 percent of the rural housing units.

Where central heat is lacking, space heaters are sometimes utilized as an alternative source of warmth. If cautionary measures are not carefully followed, however, their use can constitute a major threat to life. The lack of air conditioning is a particularly acute problem during the summer months. Some elderly persons refuse to raise their windows for fear of intruders, or to turn on air conditioning units because of economic considerations, increasing the likelihood of heat stroke and other weather related maladies. The availability of a telephone is crucial for most elderly persons, whether in maintaining social contact or for obtaining assistance during emergencies. About 10.0 percent of the homes occupied by the elderly in 1980 lacked this potentially life-saving resource, however, amounting to nearly 31,000 aged Alabamians.

Social service agencies and other community organizations have become increasingly aware of the need to provide comfort and safety to the elderly. Window locks, blankets, and fans have been distributed. Emergency shelters have been opened during periods of extreme weather. Since most of the elderly own their own homes, an extension of existing weatherization programs would appear to have much potential benefit. Low cost home improvement loans would also serve to enhance their quality of life.

Educational Attainment

Rising Educational Levels

The level of educational attainment has increased substantially for all segments of Alabama's population during the last decade. While the median years of school completed for those 25 plus was 10.8 in 1970, it had increased to 12.2 in 1980. Only 41.3 percent had completed twelve or more years of schooling in 1970, but 56.5 percent had reached that level ten years later.[19]

Similar educational gains have occurred among the elderly. The percentage aged 65 plus limited to eight years of schooling or less declined from 65.9 in 1970 to 54.1 in 1980, while the proportion completing twelve years or more increased from 18.9 to 26.7 (see totals, Table 10). Still, however, the above data indicate that educational attainment is considerably lower among the elderly than for the adult population generally. Less than half as many aged Alabamians as the general population, for example, have completed four years of high school or more.

Educational levels, as would be anticipated, vary according to age category within the elderly sector. For both males and females, the proportion completing just eight years or less rises steadily with advancing years. Conversely, the percentage having completed twelve years or more declines (Table 10).

TABLE 9

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING UNITS OCCUPIED BY A HOUSEHOLDER OR SPOUSE 65 YEARS OR OVER, BY LOCATION OF HOUSING UNIT, ALABAMA, 1980

Selected Characteristics	Location of Housing Unit					
	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Number	Percent[a]	Number	Percent[a]	Number	Percent[a]
Lacking Central Heating	84,886	69.5	70,620	39.5	155,506	51.7
Lacking Air Conditioning	64,011	52.4	55,161	30.8	119,172	39.6
No Telephone	18,762	15.4	11,904	6.7	30,666	10.2
Lacking Complete Plumbing	16,073	13.2	4,238	2.4	20,311	6.7
Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	12,463	10.2	4,316	2.4	16,779	5.6

[a]Of total number of housing units occupied by householder or spouse 65 plus.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Housing, BC80-1-B2, Table 61.

Most Still Dropouts

Even with increasingly higher educational levels, a large segment of the state's elderly suffers from an inadequate amount of schooling. Three-fifths of the females 75 plus and nearly three-fourths of the males have completed just eight grades or less (Table 10). Over 15,000 elderly Alabamians had not attended school at all according to the 1980 Census, amounting to 3.5 percent of the elderly population. Another 62,000 (14.1 percent) had attended from only one to four years.[20] Many of Alabama's aged, therefore, undoubtedly experience difficulty in confronting such routine requirements as reading food labels, understanding medical instructions, interpreting households bills, comprehending legal documents, filing medical insurance claims, and preparing income tax returns. Specialized education programs aimed at assisting the elderly in addressing such needs have the potential for yielding significant benefit.

From the data presented herein, it is evident that a high percentage of the elderly are characterized by low levels of educa-

TABLE 10

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION BY SEX, ALABAMA, 1970 AND 1980

	1970		1980	
Age Group	Percent Completing 8 Yrs. or Less	Percent Completing 12 Yrs. or More	Percent Completing 8 Yrs. or Less	Percent Completing 12 Yrs. or More
		A. Males		
65 - 69	66.9	17.8	50.7	29.7
70 - 74	70.2	16.1	57.1	24.8
75 +	74.8	14.2	67.9	18.9
Total 65 +	70.5	16.1	58.2	24.7
		B. Females		
65 - 69	59.5	21.4	44.6	31.8
70 - 74	62.7	20.6	49.9	28.4
75 +	65.8	20.6	58.1	24.8
Total 65 +	62.7	20.9	51.4	28.1
		C. Total		
65-69	62.7	19.9	47.3	30.9
70-74	65.9	18.7	52.9	26.9
75+	69.4	18.1	61.6	22.7
Total — All persons 65 +	65.9	18.9	54.1	26.7

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC (1)-D2, Table 148; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 203.

tion. Educational attainment, in turn, is highly correlated with lifetime earnings — meaning that many of the state's elderly do not have adequate financial resources for meeting the basic needs of life. Since much of the need involves medical care, specialized housing, transportation, and assistance with housekeeping, programs for the elderly are among the most expensive that individual communities and various levels of government are called upon to bear.

Income Levels and Poverty Status

Income Rises, But Real Gains Limited

Income levels increased dramatically among all segments of Alabama's elderly population during the 1970s, with the median approximately tripling for families and increasing by a ratio of 2.5 for "unrelated individuals" (basically persons living alone). (Table 11.) Elderly persons who retired during the 1970s were more apt to have supplemental pension plans than their predecessors and to receive more income from them. In addition, Social Security legislation mandating cost-of-living increases tied to the inflation rate has had a positive impact on income levels.

Still, however, the median income of families with a household head 65 plus was only about 54.0 percent of that for those aged 55-64, and just 42.0 percent of that for persons in the 45-54 age group (wherein median earnings are highest).[21] In addition, the

TABLE 11

MEDIAN INCOME OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION BY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE, ALABAMA, 1969 AND 1979

Household Composition	1969			1979		
	Rural[a]	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Family Householders, 65+ [b]	$2,706	$3,981	$3,189	$7,443	$10,303	$9,008
Unrelated Males, 65+ [c]	1,325	1,675	1,498	3,203	4,069	3,688
Unrelated Females, 65+ [c]	1,175	1,478	1,364	2,976	3,726	3,467

[a]Data for the combined rural population (i.e., rural nonfarm and rural farm) were not reported for 1969. The data appearing under the "rural" category for that year, therefore, represent an average of the median incomes reported for the rural nonfarm and the rural farm components of the population.

[b]A householder living with one or more persons related to him/her by birth, marriage, or adoption.

[c]A householder living alone or with nonrelatives only, a household member who is not related to the householder, or a person living in group quarters who is not an inmate of an institution.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-D2, Table 198; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-C2, Table 71.

Consumer Price Index more than doubled over the ten year period (rising from 116.0 to 247.0), largely negating the overall increase in income.[22] This means that although income levels have increased substantially, actual buying power in 1980 was not much greater than it was in 1970. On a more positive note, the disparity between rural and urban incomes has lessened slightly for family householders over the last decade (Table 11), as has that for families headed by the elderly as compared with the general population.[23]

Family householders have considerably more income at their disposal than unrelated individuals (Table 11). In family households, a younger spouse (usually the wife) may still be working, both spouses may be receiving Social Security benefits, and one or both may draw from retirement plans. Even if a spouse has no employment history, those 65 plus are eligible to receive Social Security payments amounting to one-half of that of the previously employed spouse. Unrelated individuals, however, do not have combined resources at their disposal, significantly limiting their ability to cope with the economic exigencies of daily living.

Smaller Proportions Below the Poverty Level

Poverty among the elderly may be related to a myriad of uncontrollable events, such as extended illness or loss of family income associated with the death of a spouse. While it is difficult to adequately determine the point at which individuals actually

TABLE 12

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF PERSONS AND UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS SIXTY-FIVE AND OVER BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL, BY RACE, ALABAMA, 1969 AND 1979

Persons, Unrelated Individuals	1969		1979	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
		A. White		
Persons	89,600	39.1	72,592	22.9
Unrelated Individuals	38,558	65.8	40,965	43.7
		B. Black		
Persons	52,416	61.9	46,740	45.4
Unrelated Individuals	20,359	85.6	23,368	70.3
		C. Total		
Persons	142,164	45.2	119,729	28.4
Unrelated Individuals	58,995	71.6	64,570	50.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-C2, Table 61.

reach poverty status, the measure most frequently used originated with the Social Security Administration in 1964 (since revised) and is based on the USDA's "Economy Food Plan."[24] Adjusted for the number of persons in the family, separate poverty thresholds are developed according to the age of the householder (or "household head"). Poverty thresholds in 1970 for persons aged 65 plus were $2,194 for a family head in a two-person household and $1,749 for an unrelated individual.[25] By 1980, poverty levels for these categories had increased to $4,389 and $3,479.[26]

About 33,500 Alabama families with a household head 65 plus, 20.0 percent of the total headed by elderly persons, were classified as below the poverty level in 1980. This compares to 14.8 percent for the general population, but represents a 50.0 percent decline in the poverty rate that existed among families with an elderly head in 1970.[27] Table 12 provides data concerning poverty levels for two additional categories: (1) persons; and (2) unrelated individuals. While the poverty rate for persons 65 plus was similar to that for families in 1980 (see totals), the rate for unrelated individuals (mostly people living alone) was considerably higher. Although the percentage below the poverty level declined for both categories during the 1970s, the actual number of unrelated individuals classified as poor increased by 9.4 percent.

The state's poverty rate has fallen among both whites and blacks during the last decade (Table 12). Still, however, elderly blacks are much more likely to be poor than whites, owing partially to a faster decline in the occurrence of poverty among whites than blacks. At a particular disadvantage, are aged blacks who live alone or with unrelated individuals, 70.0 percent of whom were still classified as poor in 1980.

While reported poverty levels in the United States have recently declined for the total population, as well as elderly persons, 12.4 percent of all persons aged 65 plus were classified below the poverty level in 1984. This compares to 14.4 percent for the total population.[28]

Source of Income

Although it is correctly assumed that most elderly persons are receiving Social Security payments (about 88.0 percent of Alabama family heads 65 plus in 1979) and that more and more are receiving benefits

TABLE 13

PERCENT OF TOTAL INCOME FROM SPECIFIED SOURCE FOR ALABAMA FAMILIES WITH HEADS SIXTY-FIVE AND OVER, BY POVERTY STATUS AND TYPE OF FAMILY, 1979

	Below Poverty Level		Above Poverty Level	
Source of Income	Female Headed Families	All Families	Female Headed Families	All Families
Earnings	18.4	12.1	50.2	39.8
Social Security	49.4	64.3	24.9	29.7
Public Assistance	25.7	18.3	6.1	2.8
Other[a]	6.5	5.3	18.7	27.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[a] Includes interest, dividends, income from the rental of property, royalities, veterans payments, etc.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 248.

from retirement plans, little is generally known about other sources of income. In addition to those previously mentioned, some elderly persons continue to work and receive income from earnings (48.4 percent of the family heads in 1979), some (22.3 percent) receive public assistance payments (Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, in particular), while some obtain income as a result of interest payments, dividends, and rental property (35.0 percent).[29]

For Alabama families with a head 65 plus and below the poverty level, the heaviest monetary dependence is on Social Security (Table 13). Almost two-thirds of the total income for this group was received from that source in 1979. Public assistance payments and earnings provide a significant amount of supplementary income, while little support is obtained from other sources. Those above the poverty level, however, received substantial amounts of income from a greater number of sources, with very limited reliance on Public Assistance. Female headed families in both groups showed more dependence on earnings and less dependence on Social Security than for all families combined.

Government transfer payments and benefit programs are extremely critical to the elderly and their importance should not be underestimated. Without these sources of income, a large number of older persons would either sink below the poverty level or become more deeply embedded therein — not a pleasant prospect for those who have reached the so-called "golden years."

The trend is for wider participation in government administered programs, probably as a result of an increased number of persons who are able to meet eligibility requirements. For Alabamians below the poverty level, for example, the percentage receiving social security and public assistance payments has increased over the last decade. Over that same period, however, the proportion receiving income from earnings has declined (Table 14).

Migration Patterns

Oldest of the Old Most Migratory

The relationship between age and the likelihood of moving from one locale to another is well documented.[30] Persons are most migratory when they are young (in their 20s and 30s). Hence, they generally exhibit less geographic mobility as they grow older. A closer examination of migration patterns reveals, however, that rates for the very young are also relatively high (as a result of parental mobility) and that those

TABLE 14

PERCENT RECEIVING SPECIFIED TYPES OF INCOME FOR ALABAMA FAMILIES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL WITH HEADS SIXTY-FIVE AND OVER, 1969 and 1979

Type of Income	1969		1979	
	Female Headed Families	All Families	Female Headed Families	All Families
Earnings	34.6	29.5	32.1	23.4
Social Security	64.0	77.5	75.5	82.8
Public Assistance	51.9	36.1	54.1	40.9
Other[a]	19.3	17.0	21.3	19.8

[a] See footnote, Table 13.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, PC(1)-D2, Table 212; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 248.

among the oldest of the elderly are generally a bit higher than those for the less elderly.[31] The loss of the spouse is the precipitating force behind many of these moves, while forced mobility due to illness or the need for nursing home care are also contributing factors.

Although most (i.e., 82.0 percent) of the state's elderly did not move between 1975 and 1980, a greater proportion of those 75 plus than in the other age groups either moved from one place to another in the same county (13.3 percent) or from one Alabama county to another (3.5 percent). This pattern held true for both males and females, with a slightly higher proportion of females 75 plus than males experiencing both intracounty and intrastate movement

TABLE 15

MIGRATION PATTERNS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION BY SEX, ALABAMA, 1975 - 1980

Age Category	Percent Same House	Percent Different House, Same County	Percent Different County, Same State	Percent Out of State or Abroad
		A. Males		
65-69	82.1	10.7	3.0	4.1
70-74	84.7	10.6	2.1	2.6
75 +	82.1	12.0	3.4	2.6
Total 65 +	82.8	11.1	2.9	3.2
		B. Females		
65-69	82.5	11.8	2.6	3.1
70-74	82.6	11.6	2.6	3.2
75 +	79.5	14.1	3.5	2.9
Total 65 +	81.3	12.6	3.0	3.1
		C. Total		
65-69	82.3	11.3	2.8	3.6
70-74	83.5	11.2	2.4	3.0
75 +	80.4	13.3	3.5	2.8
Total All Persons 65 +	82.0	12.0	2.9	3.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-D2, Table 200.

(Table 15). Due to differences in life expectancies, males are less likely to live to the point of needing specialized health care or nursing home residence. They may also be more likely to continue to live in their own home after the death of the spouse than females.

Even though the migration rate increases slightly for those in the oldest age group, those aged 65 plus are far more stationary than the population generally. While four-fifths of Alabama's elderly lived in the same house in 1980 as in 1975, the corresponding percentage for the total population was only 57.6. On the other hand, only about 3.0 percent of those 65 plus moved from one county to another within the state, while the percentage was 7.4 for all age groups combined (Table 15).[32] For those who provide services to the aged, as well as businesses and community institutions that cater to the elderly, low mobility rates make for a relatively predictable and stable clientele.

Life Expectancy

Dramatic Increase in Longevity

Life expectancies in the United States have increased greatly since the turn of the century. In 1900, a male at birth could ex-

TABLE 16

AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS OF LIFE REMAINING IN THE UNITED STATES AT SPECIFIED AGES, BY SEX, 1970, 1980, AND 1990

Age	Average Number of Years of Life Remaining		
	1970	1980	1990
	A. Males		
60	16.1	17.3	18.5
65	13.1	14.0	15.1
70	10.5	11.2	12.1
75	8.2	8.8	9.5
80	6.3	6.8	7.4
85	4.7	5.1	5.7
	B. Females		
60	20.9	22.2	23.7
65	17.1	18.4	19.8
70	13.6	14.8	16.2
75	10.5	11.5	12.8
80	7.8	8.7	9.8
85	5.7	6.3	7.2

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Life Tables for the United States: 1900-2050, Actuarial Study No. 89, SSA Pub. No. 11-11536, December 1983.

pect to live only forty-six years, while a female could expect to live forty-eight.[33] Due to substantial reductions in the infant mortality rate and medical advances in the control of childhood and adult diseases, along with various social improvements, the life expectancy for males born in 1983 had increased to 71.0 while that for females had climbed to 78.3.[34] On the average, therefore, the length of life has been extended by 25 years (in the case of males) and 30 years (for females) over a period of less than 100 years. While comparable data are not available for Alabama, similar changes have occurred within the state.

While life expectancies have increased greatly over the last eighty-five years, death has only been postponed — not eliminated. The loss of a spouse or loved one is of serious consequence at any age, but especially so for the elderly. Medical and burial expenses may deplete desperately needed financial resources and the loss of companionship at a time when social relationships have already been curtailed can be especially traumatic. Furthermore, the death of a spouse may have adverse effects on one's own life expectancy. Married persons not only report fewer physiological ailments and psychological problems than those unmarried, but are characterized by longer life expectancies as well.[35]

How many more years, on the average, can an elderly person expect to live? The answer is dependent on a number of considerations, but especially age and sex. Obviously, as a person grows older fewer years of life remain. The average male who turned sixty in 1980, for example, could look forward to living another seventeen years. A male who became eighty-five during that same year, however, could expect to live only five more years (Table 16).

Females, furthermore, can expect to live a greater number of additional years than males who are also of the same age. The typical female who retired in 1980 (at age sixty-five) could expect to live another eighteen years, but a male at that same age could anticipate living only fourteen more years. Table 16 also indicates that the average number of years remaining is steadily increasing. Between 1970 and 1990, males reaching age sixty are projected to add 2.4 years to their lives, while the increment for females is anticipated to be 2.8.

These data further document two patterns that were noted earlier: (1) the differential life expectancies between the sexes; and (2) the aging of the elderly population itself. Although the data reported in Table 16 are for the U.S. population, the available information indicates that life expectancies for Alabama residents do not vary significantly from national averages.

Summary/Prospects For The Future

The effects of major demographic change are usually not inconsequential or short lived. Manifested over a period of decades, or even generations, population shifts in earlier years may have considerable relevance for the future. The effects of these changes, furthermore, are often cumulative, growing in magnitude with the passage of time until the impact extends throughout the entire society. The westward movement of the U.S. population, migration from the nation's rural areas to its cities and metropolitan complexes, and the elevated fertility levels that prevailed during the late 1940s until the early 1960s are all examples of this phenomenon.

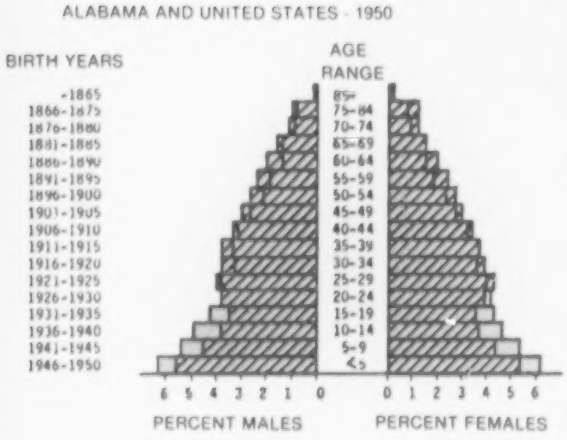
To the above events, one must also add the aging of the population. Tracing to better than a 50.0 percent increase in average life expectancy since the turn of the century, the elderly segment of the population has experienced unprecedented growth. Accounting for only 3.0 percent of the state's total population in 1900, the proportion 65 plus grew to 11.3 in 1980 and is estimated to be 11.8 at present (1985). Thousands of additional persons have entered the older age groups in recent years. So many, in fact, that in 1980 there were only about 71,000 fewer elderly persons in the state's population than teenagers.

The growth which has occurred thus far, however, represents only the beginning. Eventually, the large number of persons presently in their 20s and 30s (the so-called "baby boom generation") will join the ranks of the elderly swelling their numbers even more (see Figure 4). In 1990, well before the large age cohorts of the 1940s, the 1950s, and early 1960s reach retirement, the elderly as a percentage of the total U.S. popula-

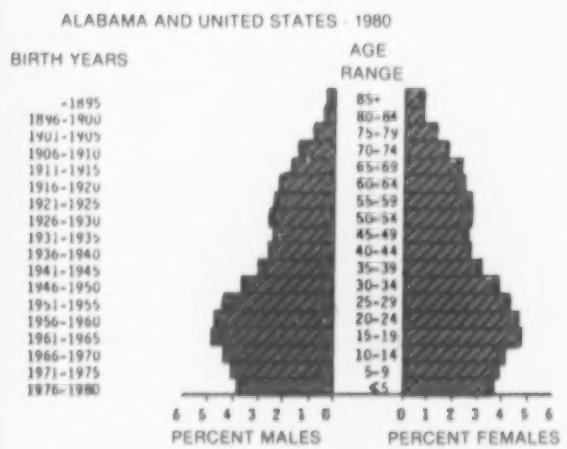
tion will have already climbed to 12.7. It will reach 13.0 percent by the year 2,000, held in check only by the low birth rates during the depression years. By 2,020, as increased numbers from the baby boom generation attain the status of "elderly," projections indicate that 51,000,000 persons in the U.S. will be 65 plus — up from 29,000,000 at present, and amounting to nearly one-fifth of the total population. In excess of 7,000,000 Americans will be aged 85 plus, along with an estimated 361,000 centenarians. In addition, the average age, for the first time in the nation's history, is projected to be in excess of forty.[38] Although comparable data are not available for Alabama, similar trends can be expected to occur within the state.

FIGURE 4

AGE STRUCTURE OF THE ALABAMA AND U.S. POPULATION, 1950 and 1980



ALABAMA		UNITED STATES	
MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
1,582,640	1,559,103	75,186,606	76,139,192
0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
0.8	0.8	1.0	1.2
0.9	0.9	1.1	1.2
1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
1.4	1.5	2.0	2.0
1.8	1.8	2.4	2.4
2.1	2.3	2.7	2.7
2.6	2.7	3.0	3.0
3.1	3.2	3.4	3.4
3.4	3.7	3.7	3.8
3.3	3.6	3.7	3.9
3.7	4.0	4.0	4.2
3.7	4.2	3.7	3.9
4.3	4.4	3.5	3.5
4.9	4.7	3.8	3.6
5.4	5.3	4.5	4.3
6.3	6.1	5.5	5.3



ALABAMA		UNITED STATES	
MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
1,871,534	2,022,354	110,053,161	116,492,644
0.3	0.6	0.3	0.7
0.4	0.8	0.4	0.8
0.8	1.3	0.8	1.3
1.3	1.8	1.3	1.7
1.7	2.3	1.7	2.2
2.0	2.4	2.1	2.4
2.3	2.6	2.4	2.7
2.4	2.7	2.5	2.7
2.4	2.6	2.4	2.5
2.5	2.7	2.5	2.6
2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1
3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9
4.0	4.1	4.3	4.3
4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7
4.9	4.8	4.7	4.6
4.3	4.1	4.1	3.9
4.1	3.9	3.8	3.6
3.9	3.8	3.7	3.5

The age-sex pyramids presented above document the passage of the "baby boom" generation through the various life stages. Now in their 20s and 30s, they will eventually attain the status of "elderly" -- noticeably swelling the apex of the pyramid.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B1, Table 45 and PC80-1-B2, Table 20.

Once major population trends are set in motion, there is little that can be done to impede the momentum. Adjustments, therefore, must be made to accommodate the long-term changes brought about by the demographic event in question. The aging of the population, a process having great impact on all segments of Alabama's citizenry, is ***not*** a temporary aberration of the age structure. Approximately 3,000 Alabamians currently achieve the status of "elderly" each month, and their numbers will greatly multiply in the years ahead.[37] At a time when present services to the state's older citizens have either been curtailed or are barely keeping pace, it is imperative that thoughtful consideration be given to the unparalleled influx of newcomers that will shortly enter the elderly age group. Day care centers, additional nursing home space, domiciliary care units, multipurpose senior centers, expanded social services, and innovative program development will all be needed. In addition, specialized housing and transportation modes, and more personnel with training in geriatrics for employment in medical, social work, and recreational settings will be required. Adding to the uncertainty of whether such needs can be met is the recent passage of the Gramm-Rudman Act. While the effects of this legislation are largely unknown at this writing, it is anticipated that there will be substantial impact on public sector programs for the elderly.

There is a tendency to postpone serious consideration of population-related matters until well after the optimum time has passed for deliberative planning and constructive action. The unique problems associated with a rapidly aging population, however, are so pervasive and of such complexity that they cannot be easily ignored. Local communities, various levels of government, business, and education — in short, all of the state's major institutions and planning organizations — must act judiciously and in a timely manner if this important challenge of the future is to be adequately met.

Footnotes/References

1. For a more detailed discussion of the implications accompanying rapid growth among the elderly, see: American Public Welfare Association, "Coming Population Changes Bode Good and Ill for Human Services," *Washington Report*, Vol. 18, No. 8 (October, 1983).
2. Estimates prepared by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery.
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6. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*, PC(1)-B2, Table 20; and U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-B2, Table 19*.
7. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B2, Table 17.
8. Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery.
9. The urban population may generally be defined as "all persons living in places of 2,500 or more inhabitants." For a more detailed examination, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-A2, Appendix A, p.2.
10. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-B2, Table 25.
11. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-D2, Table 205.
12. Estimated life expectancies were prepared by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery.
13. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, PC80-1-D2, Table 205; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*, PC(1)D2, Table 152.
14. Data supplied by the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics.

15. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-D2, Table 205.
16. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population,* PC(1)-D2, Tables 24 and 154; and U. S. Bureau of the Census,*1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-D2, Table 207.
17. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-D2, Table 207.
18. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Housing,* HC80-1-B2, Table 61.
19. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population,* PC(1)-C2, Tables 43 and 46; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-C-2, Table 66.
20. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-D2, Table 203.
21. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-C2, Table 71.
22. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1985* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 475.
23. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population,* PC(1)-D2, Table 198; and U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-D2, Table 238.
24. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-C2, Appendix B, p. 22.
25. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population,* PC(1)-C2, Appendix B, p. 30.
26. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population,* PC80-1-C2, Appendix B, p. 23.
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35. Lynch, James J., *The Broken Heart: The Medical Consequences of Loneliness* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 38-50.
36. U. S. Bureau of the Census, "Projections of the Population of the United States," pp. 43-44, 53-54, 73-74, and 81-82.
37. From data prepared by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery.

Center for Demographic and Cultural Research

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The purpose of the Center is to periodically provide Alabama citizens with descriptive, interpretive reports and other types of information concerning various facets of the state's population. The initial publication of the Center, entitled *Two Decades of Change in Alabama's Population: 1960-1970 and 1970-1980,* was released in March, 1983. Other publications include the *Alabama Population Data Sheet* (1983 edition); *Montgomery's Changing Population: Growth Patterns During the 1970s and Early 1980s,* published in December, 1984; and the *Alabama Population Data Sheet* (1985 edition). Additional copies of the present publication, (free of charge in limited quantity), may be obtained by writing the Director, Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama 36193.

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Center for Demographic
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Office for Research
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Auburn University at Montgomery
Montgomery, Alabama 36193